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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: U.S. SPEAKER ANA ARANA: WORKSHOP BRINGS TO
LIFE STRATEGIES FOR INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

1. SUMMARY: A dozen journalists drawn from independent and government-owned print and electronic media in Abuja participated in a two-and-a-half-day workshop on investigative journalism, July 15-17. Ana Arana, consultant for Inter-American Press Association, used story ideas suggested by the journalists and a simulated press conference with a government official to lead participants through a systematic process of applying investigative journalism techniques. Participants said at the end of the workshop that they would put their newly acquired skills into practice. End Summary.

2. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY: The workshop started with a simple identification exercise where each participant was asked to say why he/she became a journalist. From their responses Arana gave the first lesson of the workshop: "Journalism is a passion, not just a job." This was followed by an exercise on news values, and a mock press conference with the chairman of the Nigerian Senate Aviation Committee that probed his views on aviation safety in Nigeria. Afterward, Arana critiqued the skills of the participants in asking questions and identifying leads from the responses.

The second day witnessed more intense discussions as Arana took the class through the process of organizing various story ideas, including aviation safety, elections and religious violence. Throughout, Arana emphasized that writing investigative reports is a process that needs organization, careful thinking and questioning. The program included tips on investigative techniques, cultivating sources and principles of good reporting. The workshop concluded with a video clip and discussion on journalistic ethics--a crucial issue in Nigeria. Most participants admitted that they or their colleagues had received "brown envelopes" in return for favorable coverage.

3. JUSTIFICATION AND OBJECTIVE: Nigeria may have the most vibrant press in Africa, a press that endured decades of military dictatorships and helped to pave the way for the transition to democracy. Since then, the press has shown a robust willingness to criticize government policies, personalities and programs. But reporting is short on accuracy and long on sensationalism. Journalists lack investigative skills and a clear understanding of the role of the press in ensuring responsible governance. The workshop was intended to provide skills and attitudes that will help the press fulfill its role.

4. MPP UMBRELLA THEME AND AUDIENCE REACHED: Strengthening of democracy. Audience was a targeted group of twelve journalists drawn from independent and government-owned print and electronic media in Abuja.

5. USG SUPPORT: Excellent.

6. RESULT/IMPACT: Very good. Arana was effective in communicating to participants that doing investigative reporting is a process that needs careful organization and specific skills which she illustrated through exercises. Her interactive approach involved and energized the participants, who left with a greater appreciation of the importance of investigative reporting in ensuring good governance. Some said they would take up the

issue of aviation safety and we are waiting to see
how they will tackle this and other key issues
facing Nigeria.
JETER